United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Agreement on Memorandum of Understanding reached between Iraq and United Nations; Secretary-General says in letter to Security Council President that although agreement does not fully meet United Nations' aspirations, it should be signed and implemented without further delay.

+ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees reports relief convoys virtually halted in Bosnia and Herzegovina due to attacks and harassment on vital roads.

+ Presidents of Croatia and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia agree to ease tension and normalize relations with a view to bringing about peaceful solution to conflict in region.

+ Special Commission on Iraqi disarmament reports that Iraq has not met the conditions for "the initiation in full of the plan for ongoing monitoring" of that country's weapons sites.

+ President of Bosnia and Herzegovina proposes "immediate cease-fire" in towns of Gradacac, Broko, Maglaj and Jajce and asks that UNPROFOR observers be dispatched there to monitor cease-fire; European Community will speed up its assistance to region and establish task force to support efforts of UNHCR.

+ Secretary-General says award of 1992 Nobel Prize to Rigoberta Menchu recognizes her struggle for human rights and indigenous people's right.

+ United Nations Scientific Committee, according to 36-Power draft approved by Special Political Committee, to be asked to continue review of problem of atomic radiation doses and report to next session of General Assembly.

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According to a United Nations spokesman today, agreement has been reached on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for United Nations humanitarian assistance to Iraq.

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For information media—not an official record

In a letter to the President of the Security Council on the outcome of the talks on the MOU, the Secretary-General stated that, while the agreement did not fully meet the United Nations' aspirations, he believed it was necessary that it be signed and implemented without further delay. He would continue his efforts to strengthen the United Nations presence in Iraq, the Secretary-General said.

The official said it was expected that the agreement would be signed shortly by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Jan Eliasson, on behalf of the Secretary-General, and by the Iraqi Ambassador.

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The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Sadako Ogata, announced yesterday that transportation of relief supplies by road to Sarajevo and central Bosnia and Herzegovina had come to a virtual halt due to fighting along vital routes and attacks on aid convoys. She expressed anger and frustration over "the deliberate shelling and harassment" of UNHCR trucks. Shelling incidents, checkpoint delays and new fighting had all but shut down convoy operations from Split to Sarajevo, along the crucial all-weather Mostar road.

Mrs. Ogata said attacks on the convoys last Friday were yet another example of the failure of the various parties in the conflict to live up to their commitments. The incidents had taken place as she was meeting with the leaders of the warring parties, and just hours after UNHCR Special Envoy, Jose-Maria Mendiluce, had obtained agreements of safe passage for convoys on the Mostar route. Mrs. Ogata said the attacks called into question the authority and ability of representatives from the various sides to negotiate and to carry out agreements.

In the country as a whole, this winter some 1.6 million people will be needing a total of 9,226 metric tons of emergency supplies each week. Last week only 1,133 metric tons reached them by air and land.

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The President of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) agreed yesterday on a series of steps to intensify efforts to bring about a just and peaceful solution to the conflict in former Yugoslavia.

The joint statement, which was signed by President Franjo Tudjman of Croatia and President Dobrica Cosic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, followed a day of talks in Geneva with the two Co-Chairmen of the international peace conference, Cyrus Vance and Lord Owen. It is the second such agreement signed by Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in one month committing both sides to work for peace -- the first was signed on 30 September. A similar statement was signed on Sunday, 19 October, by President Cosic and the President of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Alija Izetbegovic.

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According to the joint statement, the two Presidents have agreed to establish liaison offices in each other's capitals, Belgrade and Zagreb, with a view to ensuring conditions for a normalization of their relations. The liaison offices will coordinate work on all open questions between Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, including reopening of roads, rail and telecommunications links, as well as re-establishing international links across the two countries. The offices will also resolve matters of personal property, pensions and remittances.

The two Presidents further reaffirmed their agreement of 30 September to facilitate the return and resettlement of displaced persons as soon as possible. They urged all parties to the conflict to end hostilities and to begin negotiation of constitutional arrangements for Bosnia and Herzegovina on the basis of agreement between the three Republics.

With respect to the delivery of humanitarian aid, President Cosic said the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia had made the necessary preparations for the secure delivery of such aid along the Belgrade-Sarajevo route.

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The Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament has reported to the Security Council that Iraq has not met the conditions for the initiation in full of the Commission's plan for ongoing monitoring of that country's weapons sites. The Commission was set up under the Security Council's resolution 687 (1991) to verify Iraq's compliance with the Council's demand for "full, final and complete" disclosure of all its weapons programmes, including weapons of mass destruction.

In its report, dated 19 October, the Special Commission said there had been no movement in Iraq's underlying position regarding its compliance with the Council's resolutions. Iraq continously sought to ensure that the implementation of the plan was proceeding "on the basis of its interpretation of its obligations, rather than on the basis of Security Council resolutions".

For the time being, the report said, the Commission remained constrained from going beyond preparatory work into full-scale monitoring and verification until it was clear that Iraq would comply with such monitoring "on the Council's, not Iraq's terms".

A team of some 50 inspectors of the Special Commission arrived in Iraq over the weekend to begin a two-week multi-disciplined weapons inspection of Iraqi sites. The inspection is the 45th of its kind to be sent to Iraq by the Commission.
Document S/24661

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The President of Bosnia and Herzegovina has proposed "an immediate cease-fire" in the vicinity of the towns of Gradacac, Broko, Maglaj and Jajce, and has asked that observers of the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) be dispatched there as soon as possible to monitor the cease-fire.

The proposal was contained in a letter to the President of the Security Council, dated 18 October, in which the Bosnian President said the aggressor was continuing with heavy attacks on the four towns, "leading to the genocide of the civil population and an enormous ecological catastrophe, since every object was being shelled".

In another letter to the Council President, dated 18 October, the Bosnian Permanent Representative to the United Nations, Muhamed Sacirbey, said the only remaining mill in Sarajevo had been destroyed by incendiary rockets launched by Serb forces besieging the city. "On Tuesday", he said, "there will be no more bread in Sarajevo." In a subsequent letter, dated 19 October, Mr. Sacirbey informed the Council that Sarajevo was still without water, electricity and heating fuel, as the aggressor's forces continued to use electricity and water services as "weapons of war against the innocent civilian population of the city".

The European Community (EC), in a declaration circulated as a United Nations document on 19 October, agreed that "immediate and decisive action was needed in the face of the impending major human tragedy in the former Yugoslavia as winter approached". According to the Declaration, the EC will speed up its assistance of food and medicines and will immediately provide further staff and resources to strengthen the capacity of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The twelve European nations also decided to immediately establish a task force to support the efforts of the UNHCR and to appoint a personal representative to supervise that operation. Document S/24682, S/24685, S/24689, S/24677

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In a message of congratulations sent to Rigoberta Menchu of Guatemala, winner of the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali said the award was a richly deserved recognition of her struggle for human rights and for the rights of indigenous peoples everywhere.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali stated further that, as the United Nations looked forward to the International Year of Indigenous Peoples and prepared for the World Conference on Human Rights, this award would be an inspiration to the United Nations in its work. It would also draw attention to the plight of Guatemala, which he hoped, would pursue with renewed vigour, its efforts toward peace and democratization.

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The United Nations Scientific Committee on the Effects of Atomic Radiation (UNSCEAR), in a 36-Power draft resolution approved by the Special Political Committee this morning, would have the General Assembly commend the

Scientific Committee for its contribution, over 37 years, to the expansion of knowledge about atomic radiation.

The draft would also have the Assembly request the Scientific Committee to continue its work, including its important coordinating activities, to increase knowledge of the levels, effects and risks of ionizing radiation from all sources.

The representative of Poland, during the Special Political Committee's debate on the effects of atomic radiation, said the international recognition and authority of UNSCEAR had stemmed from its impartiality, objectivity and considerable degree of independence. That independence had recently been threatened by the initiative to merge UNSCEAR with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). Neither organization, he added, was in favour of the merger, as their mandates were quite different.

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